

## Midshipmen Cruises

Return to Capri [letters from John Kelly, Class of 1963, to his wife-to-be, who saved all the letters!]

Mike,

I will probably need to pull out a 1962 calendar to figure out the dates, but this happened in Naples so it had to be within the first two weeks of our arrival in Italy, probably the second weekend because I think we went to Rome the first weekend. As I remember, and this might help date this exactly, we learned in Rome that Marilyn Monroe had died (from pills) [August 5, 1962].

John

written Tuesday, at sea

This is the second time I'm writing this. Late last night when I got back from liberty at about 2300 there was a letter waiting in the wardroom for me, and I wrote one to you. It wasn't too bad, but since I didn't get to mail it before we shoved off, I ought to write a better one.

I should start by telling you about Capri. Since you urged me to be bad, I don't feel as if I'm cheating. Anyway, last Saturday we took the boat to Capri. There were three of us. As soon as the boat arrived we went to this small boat stand with boats going to the Blue Grotto, so we went and got into one of them. Sitting on the pier near our boat was this girl who we thought was an Italian. She ended up getting on our boat and going to the grotto with us. I didn't sit with her on the boat but after we got back to Capri we went swimming together. She said she was from Texas and proved it with her passport. She showed us a picture of

her daughter and said she was married to an air force captain. She was a little drunk I think. After we went swimming we all went up on the funicolare to the top of the mountain and had spaghetti and molto vino. Soon we were all a little lit, and having a great time. The view was wonderful. Then we had to leave to catch the last boat back to Napoli, since I had the duty the next day. Jacki had to come back to Napoli so she came on our boat. I got a bottle of Chianti for the crossing and we kept the glow going. We had such a ball, but actually we were talking seriously about some very important subjects. Really. I told her all about you and she told us about her husband and their marriage and everything. Jackie was on her way to Athens and traveling without her husband. He had stayed in Germany with the baby. We got back late at night and got a taxi to take Jacki home. She really is a character. (The thing I remember best about this adventure was finishing the fiasco of Chianti and then throwing it off the stern into the ferry's wake and wishing we had another one.) Sunday night I stood the deck watch (mid watch) all alone. This is really great. It's a snap except the men coming back from liberty. But still there's a wonderful feeling when the ship is yours and you are the only officer not asleep. It made the mid watch almost enjoyable.

We got underway and left Napoli this morning. I had planned to mail the letter I wrote last night on the destroyer we are tied up to, but just didn't have time. Our next stop is San Remo on the Italian riviera. We'll be there Thursday morning. Right now we are on our way to join the Randolph, Independence, Shangri-La, and some cruisers in a large disposition spread out about 130 miles. The carriers are conducting strikes against places in Italy and the planes are striking the task force as bogeys on their return. There are four subs who are trying to sink us. There are also two "trawlers" trying to gather intelligence data. But they are of American and not another power which shall remain nameless. Yours are the only letters I've gotten since I got to the ship. I haven't heard from my mother since I left home, nor from anyone else. I can't understand how yours are arriving and no one elses. My mother must be planning to write me a Dear John soon. Or maybe she doesn't want to waste the stamp. This week my job is assistant electronics maintenance officer. This ship is okay, all except for one officer, the operations officer. He is Lt. Trost, a chubby mushroom like character who wears glasses. Unfortunately, Operations is the most interesting part of the ship to me. Too bad he has to spoil it. (Trost showed up in Monterey during my second year there. I did not renew the acquaintance.) The captain is an old academy type commander. The exec is a grey hard old guy and the chief engineer is a 25 year old spitting image of your father. No kidding, looks exactly like him. His name is Berklite, and he's one of the cooler officers aboard ship. He refuses to wear whites underway. Absolutely refuses. I'd better get back to work.

John

San Remo, Italy, 4 August 1962

Dear Carol,

1000-anchored as before. Ships present include the Diamond Head AE 19, USS Ware DDR 685, USS Marias, and various yard and patrol craft of the Italian Navy.

This is really a nice little town, this little place on the Italian Riviera. We anchored here yesterday morning at about 0800. I hit the beach last night and went down the road a little way to a place called Capo Nero. This is the Riviera of the travelogues and movies. Just before liberty call we had swim call and swam in the cool blue water. It was really fun. Today I think I'll hot for Monaco

since I have the duty on Sunday.

As soon as we anchored we were flooded with tourists from the beach who paddled out in little boats they rent on the beach.

You've seen the little boats you pedal like a bike. They had lots of them. All the girls came out in the meanest bikini bathing suits and just pedaled around the ship. They're like that on the beach too.

This is a little resort town to which lots of French, German and English people come, besides the Italians. There are very few American.

Yesterday before going on liberty I put on my khakis and climbed up the mainmast just for the heck of it. If you don't think it was hairy you should try it some time. There is just a little platform to stand on up there, about a foot and a half wide and five feet long. The surface-search radar is mounted on the platform and takes up most of the room. But, it's fun once you get over the fear. I stayed up there for about 1/2 hour, while two ET's were fixing the waveguide connection to the antenna.

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Now, I was also on the 3/c cruise on the Northampton, with Ron Saqui, among other mid's. Is this where we first met, or were there separate mid cruises that summer? Any letters/facts you have from that cruise will be most welcome, as well.

We all debarked for Norfolk together from the sea wall at USNA. I rode out to an old APA, I don't remember which, carrying my seabag and all my junk up the gangway from the launch. It was USS Northampton. I just read something Jon Harris wrote about running up the new 50-star US flag on Wall St while we were there. I was in that detail because I came from the 50th state. I hadn't thought of that for awhile. I have some junk from that adventure.